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SCHNABEL, AUDREY GRACE. The Art of Fantasy - Etchings. (1971)  
Directed by Gilbert Carpenter pp. 7

It is difficult to delimit fantastic art, for the notions of it vary radically from mere daydreams to complete phantasmagoricism and include beauty and ugliness, each for its own sake. Basically a romantic notion, the visionary or fantastic statement does not represent the world - at least not as far as appearances go. It does include the dynamic forces of which existence is suspect, and it is these forces which I attempt to bring into a visionary statement. The work necessarily subjective - my images are introspective - and the world of the spirit is personal. In making the transition from the spiritual to the real, I am in awe of the power of light and darkness.

THE ART OF FANTASY

ETCHINGS

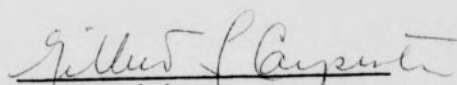
by

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To Paul, without whom this could never  
have been accomplished.

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# LIST OF ETCHINGS

Title	Size (inches)
in mitte der Ewigkeit.....	5 ½ x 6 ½
perchance to dream.....	5 x 5 7/8
a lion comes in and looks around.....	3 x 7 3/4
the rational fails.....	4 7/8 x 6
spring is a gypsy.....	8 ½ x 6
bittersweet.....	5 3/4 x 7
a sane oracle.....	6 3/4 x 4 7/8
the apostles.....	4 x 4 7/8
andante.....	3 7/8 x 4 7/8
trinity.....	5 3/4 x 8 7/8
and I will sing of phoebus.....	6 3/4 x 8 3/4
die fleischnarung.....	5 7/8 x 9 3/4
yesterday they buried him.....	6 x 8 3/8
opfer lamm.....	6 ½ x 10 3/4
the extension.....	7 ½ x 10 3/4
did I listen to the wind.....	6 3/4 x 10 3/4
self-portrait.....	5 7/8 x 5 3/4

## CHAPTER I

## INSPIRATION AND SOURCE

"Close your eyes in order to see first with the eyes of the spirit." This was the spiritualistic philosophy of nature as stated by the German Romantic, Friedrich Schelling, and this is the major source of inspiration in the series of etchings on fantasy and mystery. There are other historical figures whose effects were strong upon my work. The lunar landscapes of Caspar David Friedrich, the Gothic architectural fantasies of Carl Friedrich Schinkel, the mystic symbolism of Philip Otto Runge and Arnold Boeklin, provided the romantic view of wonder and solitude in a vague world. I found fascination in the macabre symbols of Odilon Redon and the mordant sarcastic fantasy of James Ensor expressed in the conscious exploitation of contraries in fantastic visions. In addition, the exploratory spirit of Surrealism, with its adventure of the intuition, has been a great influence upon the exhibited work. The extension of the idea beyond natural limits found in the work of Max Ernst, the machine-like humanized forms of both Picabia and Ernst, the semi-organic quality of Kandinsky's romantic abstraction, and Paul Klee's witty abstract imagery based upon expressionism have been areas of great interest. However, it is to the more immediate temporal influence



that I owe the greatest debt of gratitude. The "dancing" watercolors of Gilbert Carpenter provided inspiration for the dream imagery of lighter nature found in the floral patterns of the soft-ground technique, statements which he called my "inner landscapes." Peter Agostini's encouragement to ignore "what was going on" and express my own ideas in whatever manner I chose, offered confidence in the planning of the work.

It is to Helen Thrush that I owe my development as an artist. Her profound knowledge and sensitivity for the etching medium, her instruction in technique, her encouragement to experiment and strike out on my own, and her enthusiasm for my work has been the greatest influence in the accomplishment of this body of work. She gave me the courage to explore my own world and believe in it.

## CHAPTER II

## THE ART OF FANTASY

The statement of fantasy and vision does not represent the world in its normal state - at least not as appearances would have it. They seem to concern mainly the dynamic forces which are suspect beyond existence. Therefore, it is difficult to delimit fantastic art, for the notions of it vary radically from what may be considered fantasy to sheer phantasmagoricism and covers a whole range of expression before a power not known by its recognition of spiritual worlds. It is in this cosmic universe, pregnant with secrets of beauty and ugliness, where artistic reality exists from a vague region of nature and spirit, that I find intrinsic truth. These forces which are hard to assimilate, speak strongly of the raw primitive forces in nature, such as naked beauty, pathos, brutality, eroticism. My imagery necessarily is introspective, and in the transition from mind to matter, I am in awe of the powers of light and darkness. Therefore, some etchings accentuate delight in the truth of nature's regeneration. Others recognize the potential beauty of ugliness, because ugliness sometimes can be more revealing.

These statements are not dictated by any specific style, but rather pertain to essences. Therefore, the style is the result of the

expression. The diffused, all-over pattern, as well as the object-centered composition, allow both an extenuation of an endless horizon and an emphasis upon a specific thing. The entire body of work intends to produce form which may initiate human experience by evoking the hidden aspect of fantasy. Invented textures have their source in nature and are changed to suit the needs of the statement in order to enhance emotional expression associated with a natural environment. The sinuous patterns of the trunk of a tree, the flickering tracery of massed leaves against the sky, finger-like configurations of braches and twigs, rough weathered wood and rock, folds of hills, and the strange gnarled forms of old tree roots, are forms of nature which stir the internal mental concept. Inanimate objects suddenly have symptoms of being alive. The meanings derived from nature and human intelligence intermingle so as to end up in something altogether different, as in "die fleischnarung," or "reason fails." If the image becomes disturbing enough, it will produce a numbing of the rational and thereby contact the unconscious.

In the etchings, the attempt was made to state this quality of nature as a rhythmic order - a living force. Bio-morphic forms concerned with mystic origins of matter and manifest in the intrinsic quality of abstracted organic form can be seen in etchings such as, "perchance to dream" and "the apostles." Curvilinear design of convoluted forms in nature is conceived to indicate spatial presence by juxtaposition in "andante" and "a lion comes in and looks around."

Intuitive space and interpenetration to enhance emotional expression associated with the natural environment is handled by fractional representation and overlapping in the floral-like backgrounds of fantasies such as "a sane oracle" and "I will sing of Phoebus." The rhythmic repetitious beat allows a pulsation over the surface. These are the etchings which Bert Carpenter delightfully called my "inner landscapes."

Statements such as "die fleischnarung," did I listen to the wind," and "opfer lamm" transform organic structural growth into expressive fantasy or phantasmagoricism. These central images actually could be enlargements of one small part of the configurative patterned designs. These projected "monsters" as well as those of "self-portrait," and "extension" can be animal, vegetable, or mineral. They represent the awesome side of the experience into the unconscious. Perhaps these bestiary statements disquiet, but they are meant to be part of the irrational, and the irrational gives no security when it is ugly. Phantom brutes point to the primitive violence within man - the violence he seeks to tame in the internal states of mind.

## CHAPTER III

## PROCESS

The intaglio process seems well suited to the representation of fantasy. Elements of the statement can pass through the picture plane or appear before it by the use of relief and collage effects. The relationship between objects and their movement in space can be stated graphically with a sense of vital relationship in the artist's work, its function, and its significant human statement. Qualities of line become more sensitive and more revealing in etching than in other media. The use of a "transparent web" to define planes other than the picture plane result in tensions and interpenetrations which are more easily realized in the various grounds of the etching process. The immediate experience of the statement can be a mirror of the immediate experience of the imagination by use of various techniques of expression and projection of the medium.

Experimental procedures in soft ground, aquatint, and lift ground were devised to produce the effects of romantic environments with greater ranges of tonal qualities. The atmospheric effect of tone and line were enhanced by retroussage and the thinnest possible ink film left on the plate to give unity to the statement. In some

cases, in the biting of the plate, the wax ground was "opened up" in the acid bath. Being unable to find a soft ground of sufficient versatility and stability for my expressions, I developed a soft ground which would stand up well under the conditions of my experimentation and would answer my needs in freer handling of soft ground. It offered more stability in the character of the line in offset drawing as well as more discipline in exploitation of textural possibilities without losing its sensitivity.